

Interview with John Hogan

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project
Information Series

JOHN HOGAN

Interviewed by: "Cliff" Groce

Initial interview date: September 21, 1987

Copyright 1998 ADST

Career Beginnings Before Entrance into USIA

Q: John, what was your career before coming into USIA?

HOGAN: As a news director in Portland, Maine, I was anxious sooner or later to get out of that small environment and move to Washington. It seemed to me that would be the place where any opportunities might be available. In 1946 I had been instrumental in the foundation of the Radio and Television News Directors Association, although at that time we left the TV out; it was just NARND. We founded that in Cleveland in 1946, not knowing whether anyone would attend that first convention or not. As it happened, about 75 people showed up, and we had a respectable group to found the organization, which has since grown into a major organization. So I was not unknown in the broadcasting industry, as a result of NARND, and I thought it was a good time to put a few ads in broadcast magazines, which brought a minimal amount of responses. I got fed up with waiting and decided to go down on my own hook and found a news bureau reporting from Washington, primarily for New England radio stations.

Library of Congress

Catching on With VOA

In the course of this, I had filed application with virtually every important news organization operating in America, including VOA, from which I got the first expression of interest. They started a security clearance process, which I thought was a good idea, except that the VOA at that time was located in New York City, and I wasn't particularly interested in working at that point in New York. For a newsman who has to free-lance a lot, Washington is the most sensible place to be anyway. The very day before I was to leave, I got a telegram from New York offering me a position as a special events officer with the Worldwide English operation. I couldn't take that, having lined up six radio stations to report to from Washington, so I got on the phone and said: "I'm sorry about that; I wish I could but I can't. I have to go to Washington". They said, "Well, wait a minute; we've just started a bureau there". Mort Glatzer was in charge with Sidney Sulkin as his deputy, and a third guy named Harold Queen. They had very fine people, but they had no real radio expertise. It was suggested that I get in touch with Glatzer, and since I already had security clearance, he might be able to find something for me to do — which is what happened. I began doing daily five-minute newscasts at 3 o'clock, writing and voicing them live, as a WAE. Following the news was an interview or feature to fill out the 15 minute slot we had from Washington — what was called "the back half". And that's how I happened to get a job permanently. You know what Woody Allen says, that 80% of success in any organization is just showing up. And I showed up every day at one o'clock and finished up a little after three. Television was coming on the scene very rapidly. The smaller radio stations didn't have a huge reservoir of money with which to go into TV, and they were making cuts all over the place. So I lost a couple of my radio stations, and I could see ahead that the going would be kind of tough. So instead of going after new stations, I just let the ones I still had peter out. Every one of them sooner or later went into television. I was on WAE from August, 1948 to May of 1949 before going on staff full-time.

Secretary Acheson Addresses Malaysia

Library of Congress

The Washington Bureau responded to queries and requests for material from New York, both the English operation and the language desks. We covered the Hill and State Department. I remember Dean Acheson did spots once in a while. I remember a rather amusing incident in connection with that. We were going to start broadcasting in Malay, the language of the newly independent Malaysia, and they wanted a statement from the Secretary of State. I arranged through a guy in Linc White's shop to get it. He asked me to send over a piece of copy, so I sat down and wrote what I considered appropriate for Acheson to say in a minute and a half or so, and sent it over. Suddenly, I got a call from some middle level guy in the State Department, whose countries included the new Malaysia, and he said he wanted to see that copy. So, I sent another copy over, and of course, he sat on it. I'd call every now and then, and he said, "We're checking it, and there are certainly some changes that'll have to be made." Unbeknownst to me, the original copy was already on the Secretary's desk. Suddenly I got a call, asking, can you be over here at 4 o'clock? The Secretary will be ready to record the statement you sent over. I got Tom Hodges, the engineer, and we went over and set up in an anteroom outside Acheson's office. The Secretary read it over and said, "That's fine", and he read it as it was. The next day I got a call from this guy at State, and he said, "About that statement, I've got a few changes which I can. read to you over the phone." I said, "Oh, yesterday afternoon we recorded the Secretary with that statement." This was followed by dead silence. I said, "He approved it after it had been on his desk all this time. It's normal to go through the Public Affairs office. I'm sorry if you don't like it, but I don't think it's going to make much of a difference".

I remember when the Arabic service started, and we got a statement from the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs. And I recall Harry Truman making a Christmas message, and we went over to the White House with an old Magnavox; they weighed a ton, you know, in two parts, and we recorded Truman and sent it to New York on the line. You remember we had a full time line between the Interior penthouse and New York.

Library of Congress

Staff Transfers. Budget Shortages. and Move From New York to Washington Cause Severe Disruptions

Mort Glatzer, who was the number one man, moved up to the information program headquarters at 1778 Pennsylvania Avenue, which left Sid Sulkin in charge. Then Sid went up there too, and I fell into the job. With budget, RIFs and that kind of thing, and New York didn't have much sympathy for saving anything going on in Washington. We figured it was kind of short-sighted that they should take that attitude, but when budget cuts came around, we'd get practically wiped out. In '53 Jack Vebber was program manager in New York, later PAO in Rio and Santiago, I think a real Latin America hand. We had to save something on the staff, and I was able to get Bill McCrory and Bob Redeen on WAE by appealing to Vebber. They stayed on WAE for quite a long time.

I was sent to New York in early '54 just to keep things going, since they had RIFed so many people — perhaps a lot of them because the move to Washington was already in the wind. I would go up during the week, and Ned Roberts, who later became area director for Africa, went up with me and worked in the policy office. The head of the Voice at that point was Doc Morton, former NBC executive, I think. I'd keep the thing going, with the help of Jim Yankauer; I'd read the news, and he'd go out and get the back-half of the 30-minute program, of which we had four a day, one geared to each area of the world: Europe, Near East, Latin America, Asia. I had to voice one of the programs because we couldn't get a purchase order guy for all four of them. This commuting between Washington and New York went on for some three months, I guess.

I think English was the first to move, because of the penthouse studios we had in the Interior Department building, and the ones that were being built over in the HET; Building had not yet been completed. They started sending guys down, one by one. Doc Harper was one of the early ones, and the guy who died, Russ Shephard. He and his wife, Pat, lived in the apartment right above mine in Arlington. I heard an awful thump about five or 5:30 in the afternoon, and I went rushing upstairs to see what it was. Lo and behold he had

Library of Congress

just keeled over during his supper time. I couldn't get him to open his eyes, and he didn't respond. I held him up, in accordance with my pharmacist's mate training in the Merchant Marine. Pat was there. She took it rather calmly, and called an ambulance which arrived quickly and took him to Arlington Hospital. The guys on the ambulance were shaking their heads.

Hogan Takes Over English Service in Washington

I ran the English operation in Washington for maybe six months, and then they brought in Bill Rainey, an ex-NBC producer and NAM functionary. I remember preparing him a loose-leaf notebook on how the English service operated and the personalities working in it. Anyone reading that would have a pretty damn good idea of what Worldwide English was about, and who the people were who produced most of it.

Then Moves Temporarily to Head Latin American Service

After English, I temporarily took over the Latin American Service. They had to have somebody in the Voice to deal with Walter Lemmon's Worldwide Broadcasting Foundation which carried the Spanish and Portuguese programming to Latin America. He wasn't all that easy to deal with. We started our own Latin American Service, to send tapes to radio stations in Latin America. I did enjoy that period. I remember Virgil Fulling was on the staff. Later he committed suicide he was one of the informers during the McCarthy hearings. I didn't get too close to him, but I think Virgil was totally sincere. He wasn't out for anybody's hide, because he didn't like Barry Zorthian or what have you. I think he was a bit foolish to do what he did.

Hogan Moves on to Special Events - 1954

It must have been 1954 that I took over Special Events, because I remember that as chief, I'd get a crack at some of those overseas trips, so I always managed to save one good one for myself every three or four months, as I was interested in learning more

Library of Congress

about foreign countries. I had attempted several times to get overseas, and every time something would stand in the way.

Special Events were defined as any program origination that took place outside the studio, such as the *Courier* (a Coast Guard ship refurbished and fitted out as a floating transmitter) commissioned and turned over to the Voice of America, either live or recorded — as opposed to a reporter going out to cover a story.

The Cairo Packaging Center—Later the Cairo Programming Center

I left Special events in May of 1956 to go overseas to head what had the ungainly title of the Cairo Packaging Center. I asked them to change the name since everybody thought I was going over there to run a liquor store in a Muslim country. They changed it to Cairo Programming Center. Burt McKee was probably the first director, because he was sent over to Cairo as radio officer for USIS Cairo. I know he was there before the coup d'etat when Nasser came to power. It was the Center's job to put together everything except the news that was broadcast in Arabic, six hours of programming a day. The news came by shortwave from Washington to Rhodes, where the *Courier* was on station. (I covered the dedication of the *Courier* down at the Potomac River with Harry Truman present. Some Congressman inserted the transcript of the broadcast in the Congressional Record.) We air-mailed the tapes, and had to stay three weeks ahead of the calendar. These were obviously not timely things, of course. The news lasted 15 minutes at the top of the hour, and we did the other 45 minutes for four hours in the evening and two hours in the morning. We had a staff of some six or seven and some purchase order people we hired locally from Cairo Radio.

And we had a sub-post in Beirut, providing some material. Aly Kayaalp was out there in the sub-post when I got to Cairo, and later Gus Zavalas. Jim Barker was the division chief for the Near East, and sometimes Jim could be rather peremptory in his decisions, particularly involving people. When Aly Kayaalp was due to be transferred to Saigon,

Library of Congress

before the Vietnam war heated up as far as the U.S. was concerned, Barker told me, "I'm sending you Gus Zavalas". Gus was a very 'busy' person. You might not know what he was doing, but he was busy making deals, not illegally or anything like that, but I don't think I ever went to Beirut unexpectedly and found Gus at the office. I'd usually track him down in no time at all. We had five or six people working in Beirut, and some of them are still working for the Arabic Branch of the Voice of America today. Kamel Taweel was a difficult person to work with. He always had a beef, or complaint about something, but you could never get at what it was. You'd sit down and talk to him for an hour — I remember he came to see me at my home one afternoon, and we sat for an hour talking about the problems in the office. We went around and around, and I never knew what he was getting at. I remember Jean (Hogan's wife) saying when he left, "What was that all about?" She had sat where she could hear it. I didn't know myself, frankly. Kamel was unnerved about what some of the other people were saying about him. As I learned more about the Arabs, I learned that this is not unusual; they tend to suspect one another.

Tours in Dar es Salaam (1960) and Nairobi (1962)

I was in Cairo from May of 1956 to October of 1960, when I went to Dar es Salaam as PAO. Two years later, I went to Nairobi. I saw independence come in both countries. I was a year before independence in Dar es Salaam and a year after, and the same thing in Nairobi. Which experience, of course, did me a great deal of good as far as Africa was concerned.

Back to Washington (1965): VOA African Division Chief. Then PAO Libya

From Nairobi I returned to Washington to become chief of the VOA Africa Division. I stayed there as Division Chief only a little over a year and a half or nearly two years; I wanted to get out again, and when an opening occurred in Tripoli, I got it. That was March of 1967. Blake Cochran at that time was running the Rhodes Program Center — or was it Liberia, where he was working on programs? Henry Loomis had some sort of big idea

Library of Congress

about a program center in Liberia as a great training station where Africans could come to study broadcasting. It was an interesting period

Assignment to Vietnam: 1970

From Tripoli, I went to Vietnam, where I spent five years —PsyOps adviser for the first region for three years, and then press attach# for the ambassador for two years,, with the rank of Minister-Counselor, believe it or not. {Editor's note: Hogan was in Vietnam when South Vietnam fell to the Communists. In a second interview, which follows this one, he deals at more length with his experiences in Vietnam, particularly the frantic evacuation in April of 1975}

After I got back to Washington, when Vietnam fell in April of 1975, those of us who had served in Vietnam had a tough time getting an assignment. I couldn't get anywhere. I went down to see Ken Giddens (VOA Director), and said, "Look, I can't find anybody who's interested in the least in hiring me, in the Voice or anywhere else in the Agency. I'd like to see if you've got anything going around here that I could help with." "Well", he said, "I think maybe we have. How would you like to go to Rhodes? We've got to close that place down in a year and a half." In a year and a half I'd be 60, and have to retire under the law of the time. So, I closed the place down, with Kamel Taweel

Intervention here by Russ Black. Who Tells of a Nixon Visit to Africa in Which Hogan was Involved

BLACK: When Nixon returned from an African trip on which Eisenhower had sent him in '57, he reported that the continent needed a broadcast service. John Hogan was sent from Cairo to accompany him on that trip as the VOA correspondent. They put out a memorandum saying: You are now the African Service. I was the editor of a transcription service for Africa at the time, which was a small part of the Near East Operation from the Courier at Rhodes — so we changed our name and started broadcasting. It was about then that Jack Logan joined us, and Tom Snyder was there. For two years we were

Library of Congress

broadcasting into blank space. We didn't have a listener in Africa. Jack Logan was in the reserve in the Navy, or something, and he got on a Navy cruiser that went all around Africa. They couldn't pick up a signal even with that high powered Navy equipment. They sent a second trip all around Africa, and they came back and said not one place could it be picked up. So for two years we broadcast into thin air. At the same time, Henry Loomis was traveling through Africa, and I got a copy of one of his speeches in which he described being told by a man in a loin cloth that he listened to the Voice of America every night.

John Hogan Now Resumes Narration. and Speaks Again of Earlier Dar es Salaam and Nairobi Events

HOGAN: When I was in Dar es Salaam, that Liberia transmitter was booming in there like a ton of bricks. We had a lot of well educated people in Kenya when I was there. The British did a terrific job. I don't doubt that our audiences in Africa was not good in the early days. Walter Lemmon, with his station in Boston, instead of just beaming to Latin America, was shifting over to reach the Portuguese speaking countries of Angola and Mozambique. He carried some VOA programs on contract, I think and whether or what effect they had I don't know. After the Nixon trip to Africa, it was decided that they would name an Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. Palmer was his name. I was able to join the Nixon party in time to cover the independence celebrations in Ghana. Jack Logan was also out there at the time, just for the Ghana portion of the trip, as I recall.

Off Again. On Again Retirement: 1977

I was due to retire in July of 1977, which was about when Rhodes was slated to close down. We transferred programs back to Washington piece meal, with 50% of the staff sent back to Washington, and then later, the rest of them. In June I got a wire saying, "We lost the case (to change the retirement age in the Foreign Service) but we can delay your retirement" — I forget how long — so I decided to stay a while longer. I came back and sat

Library of Congress

on my duff and didn't do a heck of a lot, but helped the Arabic Service out with all kinds of chores. When the court decision was reversed by the Supreme Court, saying both State and USIA had a right to set retirement age, I went ahead and retired.

Random Reminiscences of Persons and Events in a Long Career

Through my years in the Foreign Service, my experience with VOA included visits from correspondents, whom I provided with facilities and help. Even when I was still in Cairo they sent an English correspondent out to report from the CPC. I'm not sure I like the new arrangement for the VOA correspondents, which came into effect while I was in Vietnam. I used to brief correspondents all the time, of course, and I paid special attention to VOA, partly because it was broadcasting back to Vietnam.

I never could figure out why the press, the commercial press, operated the way it did in Vietnam. They were like lemmings, following whatever the New York Times man was writing. If he was against something, everybody else would slant their stories the same way. AP for a while had some very important journalists running their bureau in Saigon, but it whittled itself down to a reporter named George Esper. I used to say that George had in his lower right hand drawer a number of stories with blanks in them which he would just fill in before filing. The AP was not nearly as responsible as the UPI, and it's quite often the other way around. I don't think Esper had much training, although he wrote a book about Vietnam, which I haven't bothered to read. He always overdid the importance of everything he was reporting on. He started with the AP as what they call a gofer, fetching this and that. Little by little, George rose and finally wound up as bureau chief. UPI had some real heavyweights.

In recalling Eddie Raquello; he used to call five minutes or so before closing time, often on a Friday night. Just having to have something from Washington, some outlandish request. The silent sound tape he wanted from inside the Lincoln Memorial was just the last straw. He always went around with a little bit of wet cigarette hanging down, dripping ashes. He

Library of Congress

called everybody Sweetie Pie. Some of the time I was able to talk him out of his wilder requests.

I still have recordings of the entire series of McCarthy hearings regarding the Voice, the old 15-inch acetate discs we used to put programs on. I've kept them because I thought they might be of some use some day. There was another set of recordings in New York, which disappeared. I have no idea what happened to them. I tried to give mine to the Voice — they're really the Voice's property — but nobody wanted them. If today's leadership wants them, they're welcome to them, but I can't afford the cost of shipping them from Hawaii.

{Another Intervention by Russ Black. Having — Confusedly —to Do With the Factions Within the Voice When He Came Back from RFE}

BLACK: There was the Vienna combine, I think they called it, and there was Jerry Dooher's group. In the Vienna combine, you had Walter Roberts and John Albert and Bob Bauer. Jim Barker took dead aim at me, and kept giving me bad assignments. I went down there and said to him, "You apparently have something against me. Why don't you just punish me, punish me real bad, and let's get it over with and maybe I can go ahead and do my work." "Why, I have every confidence in you", he said. "I've done everything I could to further your career." So, I'd go back, and in two or three months he'd lower the boom again. Hogan agrees he was a difficult man to work for, though he says he got along with him all right.

Hogan Reminiscences Continued

HOGAN: Gene King appeared to do things on the spur of the moment. I first bumped into him in Paris, when he was with the ECA radio operation. I went there to cover the sixth UN General Assembly, and I was told by someone in New York, maybe A1 Puhon, to go see Gene King to get the use of a tape recorder. We didn't have these nice little portable ones in those days. When I went to Gene King, he says, "Well, I may not have a long white

Library of Congress

beard, but I 'm sure your mistaking me for Santa Claus. I don't have a machine to let you have.” Another guy, who'd been working with us in Paris since the war, fixed me up with a recording machine. Gene was a difficult person, they say. I had no trouble with him. He gave me that job in Cairo — that is, when it became vacant he decided I should go over and take it. He knew I'd been trying to get overseas and had had no luck so far. When I had a chance to go as PAO in San Salvador, he asked me to stay and keep running the Latin American Service, dealing with Walter Lemmon, and he would see that I got the first good job overseas that came up. And the first one that came up, in the spring of '56, was the chief of the Cairo Packaging Center.

John Wiggin left his mark on the Voice probably as much as any guy I can think of, not only for Music USA, but for starting the program reviews. Doc Harper also qualifies as a “character”. He was one of the sweetest men I ever knew. He was one of the ones sent down before the Voice moved to Washington. We were doing English programs from the penthouse of the Interior Building as one of the first stages in the move to Washington, and Doc was among the pioneers to get the place going. He was so faithful to come in. I'd need a guy to voice a show at 8 o'clock at night because somebody hadn't shown up and he'd come in. He'd say, “I live not too far away, and I don't mind.” He was a topkick in the Infantry in World War I, and had worked on a farm in Illinois. I don't know whether or not he had had any medical training which led to his nickname, Doc. He was a good one to use if we had something to do with John Foster Dulles. Dulles liked him very much. L. Baldwin Harper. He used that name to Dulles.

End of first Interview The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs
Oral History Project Information Series

JOHN HOGAN

Interviewed by: Michael Brown

Library of Congress

Initial interview date: February, 1988

Copyright 1998 ADST

[EDITORIAL NOTE: Mr. Hogan was terminally ill when this interview took place. This placed a limitation on the interviewer's ability to probe more deeply into Mr. Hogan's evaluation of USIS accomplishments during his service in each country. Furthermore, Mr. Hogan had been interviewed several months earlier on September 21, 1987. Although that interview concentrated more on his VOA work, there is of necessity some overlap of information with the current one.

Mr. Hogan died a few weeks after this interview was conducted. It was never possible to clarify his remarks further. G. Lewis Schmidt edited the transcript as best he could after Mr. Hogan's death.]

Q: Mr. Hogan has been on the end of a lot of interviews, giving them, and this may be one of the first times he has been interviewed. So, we are going to talk to him for the Oral History Project of USIA, since Mr. Hogan is one of the long-time members with the US Information Agency.

Biosketch: John Hogan

Q: So, John, let me start out by asking you, where are your roots?

HOGAN: Oh, well, I came originally from Portland, Maine, born in Lewiston, and was brought up in Maine, went to school there. I went to college, actually, down in Georgia, Mercy University. That is not how I got into the Information Service, however.

Q: Tell me, let us take it up to World War II; is then when you first became acquainted with the antecedents of USIA, or were you in the Army?.

Library of Congress

HOGAN: I was in the U.S. Merchant Marine. I think the total years in that organization were three, after which when the peace was signed with Japan, I left. You did not have to wait to be disowned by your service and discharged; you could go any time you wanted to and that was one of the reasons I joined the organization in the first place.

At the end of World War II I did go back into the radio business, broadcasting business in Portland, Maine, my hometown, although I had never worked in that town before, I stayed there for about two and one half or three years.

VOA Washington Program Center

Then, in 1949, I came to Washington and took a job as Voice of America Correspondent for the Washington, DC area. We had a studio there in the old Interior Department Building and we had about eight or ten people on the staff.

I remember doing a newscast in English every afternoon, beamed, they said, primarily at the intelligentsia of the Soviet Union. I used to put that little newscast together every afternoon, voice it, and that was the end of my work for the day.

Q: This was when VOA was still headquartered in New York so what you had in Washington at that time was sort of a branch post for Voice of America before you got into it.

HOGAN: That is right. It was a branch post. We called it the Washington Program Center, and the Washington Program Center was headed by Mort Glatzer, I do not know if you remember him, and Sidney Sulkin. They were the two in there.

Then I came in and worked on the recordings and the newscasts and that sort of thing.

Q: When did you join the Foreign service, John?

Library of Congress

HOGAN: I joined the Information Agency when it was still part of the Department of State.

Q: The State Department?

HOGAN: The State Department. That was in 1949, I think, May, 1949. It was very interesting for me, because I had never had any connection with international broadcasting prior to my association with VOA. I must say I enjoyed it very much.

Q: When did you finally get an assignment overseas?

First Overseas Assignment: Cairo Program Center

HOGAN: My first assignment overseas was in, again, May of 1956. I went over as director of the Cairo Programming Center which they called then the Cairo packaging center, because it packaged programs for shipment to Arab countries throughout the Middle East. I asked that the name be changed from packaging to Program center because too many people thought I was there to sell liquor.

Q: You know, all of us, I think, remember our first assignment overseas, probably looking back on it even more than some of the later ones. Tell me, how did you feel when you went to Cairo and your impressions working out of Egypt at that time: because this is the time things were beginning to really heat up in that area.

The Suez War — 1956

HOGAN: Well, the lid blew off not long after I got there, actually, I arrived in May of 1956 and in October there occurred the Tripartite War: the effort on the part of France, England, and Israel to gain control of the Suez Canal or at least get it out of the hands of Gamal Abdel Nasser, who was the boss of Egypt at that time.

That blew up and I was right there to see it.

Library of Congress

Q: Did you, at that particular time, besides doing the packaging program work, did you get involved with a lot of diplomatic things that were going on during that period.?

HOGAN: To a certain extent, yes. Not as much as if I had been a member on the diplomatic list or anything like that, because at that time, while we were still, I believe—well no, in 1956, we were an independent agency—by then, we were an independent agency, anyway.

We were not privy to all of the activities of State, but I got around to some extent, made a lot of friends there.

Q: Did you go from there to Kenya, or was that later on?

Assignment as PAO in Tanganyika

HOGAN: That was later on, but I went first to Washington and then did not stay there very long. I got another assignment; that was PAO in Dar es Salaam, Tanganyika. It became later Tanzania as you know.

PAO Kenya

After a two-an-a-half year tour there, I was transferred to Kenya as the PAO in that country. That country was a year away from independence, so I had the unique experience of serving in Tanzania or Tanganyika, as it was called then, a year before independence, and a year after; and the same in Kenya, a year before independence and a year after.

So, all told, I spent almost five years in East Africa.

Q: What were your impressions of Africa at that time?

Library of Congress

HOGAN: Well, those were exciting days, you know. We watched this country become independent and the people who ran it, who were supposedly non-corruptible, little by little go down the slippery slope. Tanganyika never has fulfilled all of the hopes that we, in the Western World, thought it would achieve after independence because of, I believe, President Nyerere's African socialism, as he called it.

He was very fond of the idea of socialism and he would — you could talk to him and, incidentally, that was one of the more interesting thoughts of serving in East Africa, you could talk very frequently face-to-face with the leader of the country.

It was not at all like Egypt, where, of course, if you saw Gamal Abdel Nasser in some military parade, that was as close as you got to him. The only people who ever saw him at the Embassy were the ambassador and maybe the deputy chief of mission or something like that.

But we had access to the cabinet ministers in Tanzania—well, Tanganyika—as it was called. Incidentally, it did not become Tanzania until it merged with Zanzibar and that is where the name came from, Tanzania.

Q: Yes, you followed, of course, you were there at the time when the British were moving out because they were certainly influential in both of those countries. Was there still a lot of British influence in Kenya and Tanzania during your time?

HOGAN: Oh, there was, indeed, a lot of British influence. However, there was more in Kenya than there was in Tanzania. In Tanzania, the British had had that as a colony only since the end of World War I, whereas in Kenya they had settled that as early as 1902, and so on. I think that is when they started building a railway from Mombasa up to Kenya and then further on to Uganda.

However, they encouraged settlers to come to Kenya, which they never did in Tanzania or Tanganyika. Tanganyika was not a colony by any means. It was a trust territory of the

Library of Congress

United Nations. So, they really did not have quite the free hand there that they had in Kenya.

Libya and the Qadhafi Coup

Q: Where did you go from Africa, John?

HOGAN: From Africa I went to — let us see now. I went back briefly for about a year and a half to run the African Division of the VOA. Then I was transferred to Tripoli, Libya; capital of Libya, as the Public Affairs Officer, where I stayed for a regular — a full tour. And it was a complete change

Q: That was before our friend, Mr. Qadhafi, was it not.

HOGAN: Yes, well, his statement of his conditions for government, as it were, occurred during my stay there. Well, actually, during the very last days of my stay. I was due to be transferred and be sent to Vietnam. I had already been assigned a post in Vietnam and I was due to come back to Washington and take training. Before I could get out of town, this bloodless coup—it was fairly bloodless, I understand a few people were killed, but we never did learn exactly how many—occurred.

In Libya, of course, during the days the old King, Idriss, the security was directly in the hands of the Libyan police, not the Army. That is how the coup was finally pulled off: units of the Army were being transferred from one end of the country to the other and as they passed through Tripoli, they managed to get their ducks in a row and conduct a coup.

We heard about it the next morning, but I was due to be transferred anyway, very shortly. I couldn't get out for about thirteen days because the new government closed the airport, but when the airport finally opened, I got out and was sent back to Washington.

Vietnam

Library of Congress

Q: You went from one quiet place to another?

HOGAN: Yes, Yes.

Q: Vietnam?

HOGAN: A lot of pressure.

Q: How long were you in Vietnam, John?

HOGAN: I was in Vietnam a total of five years. I served —

Q: You served in the jurisdiction of “I” Corps?

HOGAN: Yes, at Da Nang. There were CORDS and PsyOps representatives for the provinces up in “I” Corps Area, and for just about three years I held that job. Then I was transferred down to Saigon to take over the post as press spokesman for the embassy. That assignment was under Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker, and later on, Ambassador Graham Martin.

So, I stayed there a total of two years in Saigon, and three years in Da Nang.

Q: You were there in Saigon at the end, too?

HOGAN: Yes, that is right.

Q: What are your impressions of that—those last days in Vietnam?

HOGAN: Well, I will tell you they happened a little bit faster than we thought they would, frankly, but we were pretty well prepared for it. All day that last day which was the 30th, I believe, of April, we had to start evacuating a lot of the Vietnamese who came to the embassy.

Library of Congress

We started the evacuation much earlier, really, of Vietnamese who had worked closely with us in Vietnam about April 4th, if not before then, and we were getting them out little by little.

I know I was responsible for the evacuation of all of the local employees of American news media working in Saigon, and their families. I managed to get out 598 of them before the whistle blew, and before they were caught. They would have been prime targets, I am sure, at the very least harassment by the Vietnamese communists.

Q: When you think of it now, 1975 seems like a long time ago, 13 years ago, but I am sure for all of you who were there in those days, in many ways, it still seems like yesterday, does it not?

HOGAN: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. That was the very busiest day in my life, that last day in the embassy compound. Looking back at it, I was so busy that now I cannot remember what I did. But I remember being on the phone a great deal, trying to round up more people to get them into the embassy compound and thereby get them out of the country.

We succeeded in doing that. In balance, I think, very well. Indeed, however, some were left behind. There is no question about that, and we were certainly sorry about that.

Q: Looking back at all the years you served in different areas, Africa, North Africa and Asia, and the last five years in Vietnam, what stands out in your mind now?

HOGAN: Well, I suppose — well, someone asked me not long ago what my best post was; which post have you enjoyed most? I said, indeed, that is hard to say, but I can tell you which one I enjoyed the least; that is no problem.

That was Libya, because there was that undercurrent of discontent under the king and the life in Tripoli was not as pleasant as it was in Cairo or East Africa, or even in Washington.

Library of Congress

It is a country, you know, that is 95% sand, and every year they would have those violent sand storms in which sand would come filtering in underneath your doorstep

Q: They have a name for those, don't they?. Those storms?

HOGAN: Yes, they have. I am trying to think what it is. I cannot — they are not monsoons, but they are “gibleys”. Gibleys, that is what they are.

Q: Yes. You cannot see your hand in front of your face, can you; when you get one of those?

HOGAN: No, that is right. They had that to some extent in Cairo, too, but it was much more pronounced in Libya. I did not enjoy Libya nearly as much as I enjoyed Cairo and the East African posts.

Q: John, thanks very much for this interview. I hope this will be helpful to our people putting together the oral history back in Washington.

HOGAN: I certainly hope so, too. I appreciate that.

Q: We have been talking to John Hogan here in Honolulu, Hawaii, on March 29, 1988. Thank you very much, John.

End of interview